



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**  
Jacksonville District

# NEWS RELEASE

Release No.: 07-41

For Release: August 7, 2007

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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

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## **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers begins work on Orlando school grounds**

Jacksonville, Fla. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced today that work is beginning at the Odyssey Middle School in Orlando, to investigate the potential presence of World War II-era military munitions. The school is located on the former Pinecastle Jeep Range property, a site used in the 1940s by the Department of Defense for military training and munitions testing. While most remaining ordnance is buried beneath the surface of the ground, the recent discovery of surface ordnance on private property adjacent to the school prompted the action.

At a public availability session held on Tues., July 24, Corps representatives reported to the community that three fuzed practice bombs and an incendiary device (a small bomb) were discovered by the landowner, about 1500 feet from the school. Following proper safety protocol, the landowner notified local law enforcement, and a team of munitions experts from Patrick Air Force Base safely disposed of the items. The property is separated from the school by a barbed-wire fence and is posted as private.

The discovery of the surface munitions coincided with the Corps' announcement that a Site Inspection had recently been completed. In the interest of public safety, the Corps immediately set in motion plans for a time-critical removal action, to include investigation of the school grounds prior to the start of the 2007-08 school year. Accordingly, the Deputy Secretary of the Army for the Environment,



Safety and Occupational Health, Mr. Addison D. Davis, IV designated \$1.1 million to facilitate the prompt interim removal action.

A contract was awarded to USA Environmental, Tampa, Fla., and work will include:

- Soil testing on school grounds, beginning Tues., Aug. 7, to identify potential contamination from munitions that were used on site. Several soil samples taken on the adjacent property where the surface ordnance was found contained nitroglycerin, a compound commonly found in explosives.
- On or about Aug. 9, geophysical survey of the school grounds with a magnetometer (metal detector), to identify the presence of ferrous metal and further investigation, if necessary, to determine if any of the metal identified includes munitions of concern.
- On or about Aug. 17, construction of a fence to separate the school property from the private property where surface ordnance was found.

Additionally, plans to proceed with a munitions response and removal action to address the adjacent property will proceed as planned, with a contract scheduled to be awarded by the end of September.

“This is certainly a good news story for the Orlando community,” said Col. Paul Grosskruger, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District. “With safety as our utmost priority and with the personal dedication and concern of our entire team, this is a shining example of when our laws and systems work well for us. We are happy to be able to bring peace of mind to the families and staff of Odyssey Middle School.”

On behalf of the Department of Defense, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers cleans up sites that were formerly used by the military. In 1943, the U.S. government leased 12,483 acres of land in Orlando (Orange County) as an off-post site of the Pinecastle Army Airfield, for use as a gunnery and demonstration range for testing and training troops. From 1944 to 1945, ordnance was dropped from



aircraft on ground targets during training exercises. Pinecastle Jeep Range was declared surplus property and all leases were terminated by December 1947. The property is currently privately owned.

“The purpose that these sites served in preparing our armed forces to protect our country is an important part of our history. Now it is just as important that we protect the safety and health of our citizens and our environment by cleaning up what remains from that mission,” said Grosskruger.

Safety is always the Corps’ top priority. On July 13, several munitions items were safely removed through coordination with local law enforcement; however, some items may still be present. Even after 60 years, a piece of ordnance may explode if touched, potentially causing serious injury.

It is vitally important that anyone who discovers suspected ordnance items follow the simple “3 Rs” of safety: **Recognize** the item may be dangerous; **Retreat** and do not touch it; **Report** its location to the local Sheriff’s Office immediately.

For more information about the former Pinecastle Jeep Range site or the upcoming public availability session, please contact the Corporate Communication Office at 904-232-1576.

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Media availability: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will host a media availability session on site at Odyssey Middle School, Friday at 9:00 a.m. Ongoing work will be demonstrated and described. This opportunity will allow our contractor to proceed, uninterrupted, as they complete their work prior to the opening of school.